

# Taking Care of Yourself

by Dr. A. Panos



**Let anyone or  
anything stress you  
to the point that  
you stop  
taking care of  
yourself!**

# Objectives

- Identify 3 essential things (ABC's) to remember to take good care of yourself
- Describe your personal warning signs of distress
- Determine how to set boundaries for yourself within your organization

# Case Study

- Discuss the handout and determine:
  - What are some risk factors for Sam?
  - What are some resiliency factors for Sam?
  - What recommendations would you make for him to have more effective coping?
  - What could his family and friends do to better support him?

# ■ The ABC's of Taking Good Care of Yourself

■ A= Awareness



# Terms and Definitions

- Compassion Fatigue
- Vicarious Traumatization
- Secondary Traumatization
- Burn-out
- Compassion Stress



(defined in Figley, 1995)

# A=Awareness

- When do you know you haven't taken care of yourself?
- What are your warning signs?
- How would you know if you had compassion fatigue?



# Compassion Fatigue Signs and Symptoms

- Affects many dimensions of your well-being
- Nervous system arousal (Sleep disturbance)
- Emotional intensity increases
- Cognitive ability decreases
- Behavior and judgment impaired
- Isolation and loss of morale

# Signs and Symptoms, continued

- Depression and PTSD (potentiate both)
- Loss of self-worth and ability to modulate emotions
- Identity, worldview, and spirituality impacted
- Psychological needs not met-safety, trust, esteem, intimacy, and control
- Loss of hope and meaning=existential despair
- Anger -toward perpetrators or causal events



# Small Group Exercise

- Discuss a case/situation that caused you to take it home with you- or caused some symptoms of compassion fatigue
- Identify what factors caused you to identify with the person/victim/family/event

# Risk Factors

- Cases which break through your usual “insulation” or boundaries put you at higher risk.
- Can occur due to exposure on one case or can be due to a “cumulative” level of trauma



# What events or cases can cause compassion fatigue?

- Events or situation that causes one to experience an unusually strong reaction
- Often overpowers one's usual coping mechanisms



# What events or cases can cause compassion fatigue? (continued)

Each helper's empathic engagement with each client's unique experience;

Helper's unique personal response based on personal history, style, current life circumstances, as well as proximity and personal connection to the events and people involved in the trauma/tragedy

# A= Awareness, continued




- Ability to function is interfered with or altered.
- Situation or incident does not seem “typical or ordinary”, it feels traumatic.
- “Compassion stress” impinges upon or breaks through normal boundaries

# Awareness, continued



- Regularly waking up tired in the morning and struggling to get to work?
- Feeling as if you are working harder but accomplishing less?
- Becoming frustrated/irritated easily?
- Losing compassion for some people while becoming over involved in others?
- Routinely feeling bored or disgusted?
- Experiencing illness, aches and pains?





■ “The quality of strength lined with tenderness is an unbeatable combination...” - Maya Angelou

# Self-Awareness Exercises

- Compassion Fatigue Test (see Dr. Beth Hudnall-Stamm's "Professional Quality of Life Scale")

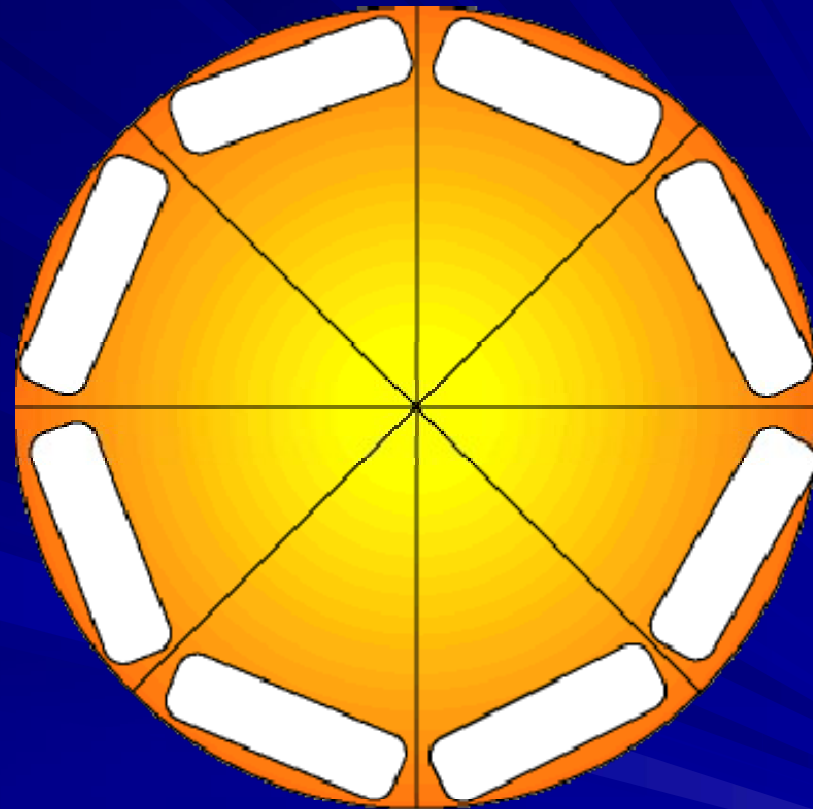
Here is a tool you can use to assess the level of your satisfaction with all of the aspects of your life.

## LIFE BALANCE

Place each aspect of your life in the space in each segment. Some suggestions follow. Modify these to represent those that are meaningful to you.

- Self Care
- Work
- Intimate Partner/Family
- Friends/Social Life
- Financial Aspects
- Health & Wellness/Body Image
- Spiritual Aspects
- Community/Service

Now rate your satisfaction with each aspect, using a scale from zero to ten, with ten being very satisfied and zero being completely unsatisfied. Place a mark indicating your choice in each segment of the circle, with zero at the center and ten at the rim. Connect all of the marks around the circle to see how balanced your wheel is.



# B= Balance

- **Maintaining a good work-life balance involves taking time off to recharge and avoiding working long hours and/or carrying too heavy of a caseload or workload.**

# B= Balance

## Keeping Your Life in Balance

- Practice excellent self-care
- Nurture yourself by putting activities in your schedule that are sources of pleasure, joy and diversion
- Allow yourself to take mini-escapes- these relieve the intensity of your work
- Transform the negative impact of your work (find meaning, challenge negativity, find gratitude)

# Small Group Exercise

- List one mini-escape or diversion that worked well to restore and renew you
- List one thing that brings you joy
- Share highlights and unique ideas with each other



# B= Balance

Keeping Your Life in Balance, continued

- Get medical treatment if needed to relieve symptoms that interfere with daily functioning- don't use alcohol or drugs to self-medicate
- Get professional help when needed to get back on track- we all need coaches and consultants at times



"We can be sure that the greatest hope for maintaining equilibrium in the face of any situation rests within ourselves."

Francis J. Braceland

# Balance for our Emotional Needs

- Emotions are a signal that tell us when something is wrong or we are out of balance
- We all need meaning and purpose in our life
- We all need autonomy and freedom to make choices that bring us balance and happiness

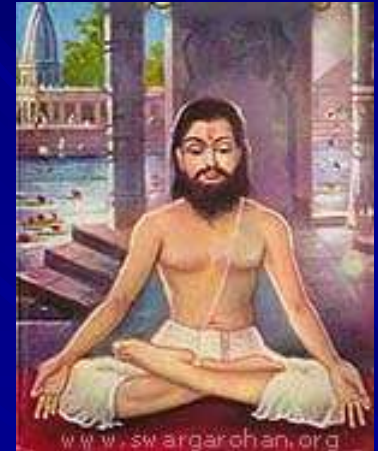


# Find Hidden Passion

- We all have hidden sources of energy and healing power.
- When you identify the things that fuel you, the things that you have true passion for, your fatigue will disappear.
- Balancing your life involves putting the things that we value and have passion for in our schedule.

# Patanjali – the author of Yoga Sutra

“When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break their bonds: Your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great, and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be.”



# Balance for Your Soul

- Have quiet alone time in a calm, beautiful place- a safe retreat where you feel renewed
- Have an awareness of what restores and replenishes you
- Find ways to acknowledge loss and grief
- Start a meditation or mindfulness practice



# B=Balance

- **Connect with Mother Nature**

- **Forest Bathing**

- Being out in nature is therapeutic, whether you go for a hike in the woods, a walk on the beach, or just do a little gardening.

# Perspective and Focus

- Stay clear with commitment to career goals or your personal mission
- Know how to focus on what you can control
- Look at situations as entertaining challenges and opportunities, not problems or stresses

# B=Balance

- Get involved with activities outside of work
- Take your mind off of work by taking a class or engaging in a creative endeavor that relaxes you, such as drawing, painting, crafts, or writing.

"Balance, peace, and joy are the fruit of a successful life. It starts with recognizing your talents and finding ways to serve others by using them."

Thomas Kinkadee



# Ancient Proverb



- Equation for the value of your life
  - Your Health = 1
  - Everything else in your life = 0
  - Put a one first, in front of all the zeros and you will have the value of your life
- Without your health, you have nothing.

# Keep Yourself Physically Strong

- Exercise
- Relax-Breathe
- Get adequate sleep
- Good nutrition and water
- Good medical and preventative care





# Put Joy, Love, Hope, Laughter and Gratitude in Each Day

- Name 3 things you feel grateful for today-
- Think of something that has brought you a sense of joy (Make your top ten list)
- Who do you love that you can reach out to today? (Call them!)
- What made you laugh today? (Share it!)

# B=Balance

- Use humor to unwind
- Humor is good medicine when it comes to relieving stress and improving one's mood. Watch a comedy, play with a pet, read a funny book—whatever moves you and helps you relax.
- Share what made you laugh today

# C= Connections

- What kind of connections are helpful and meaningful?
  - Case Example of Sam?

# C= Connections

- Talk out your stress-  
process your thoughts and  
reactions with someone  
else (coworker, therapist,  
clergy, friend, family,  
supervisor)
- Build a positive support  
system that supports you,  
not fuels your stress



# Pet Connections?

- Pets accept whatever affection you are able to give them without asking for more---
- Pets are basically invulnerable to “provider burnout”—
- Blood pressure and heart rate decrease when interacting with animals





■ Hope does not take away your problems.

*It can lift you  
above them.*

Maya Angelou

# Conclusions

- A= Awareness
- B= Balance
- C= Connections



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